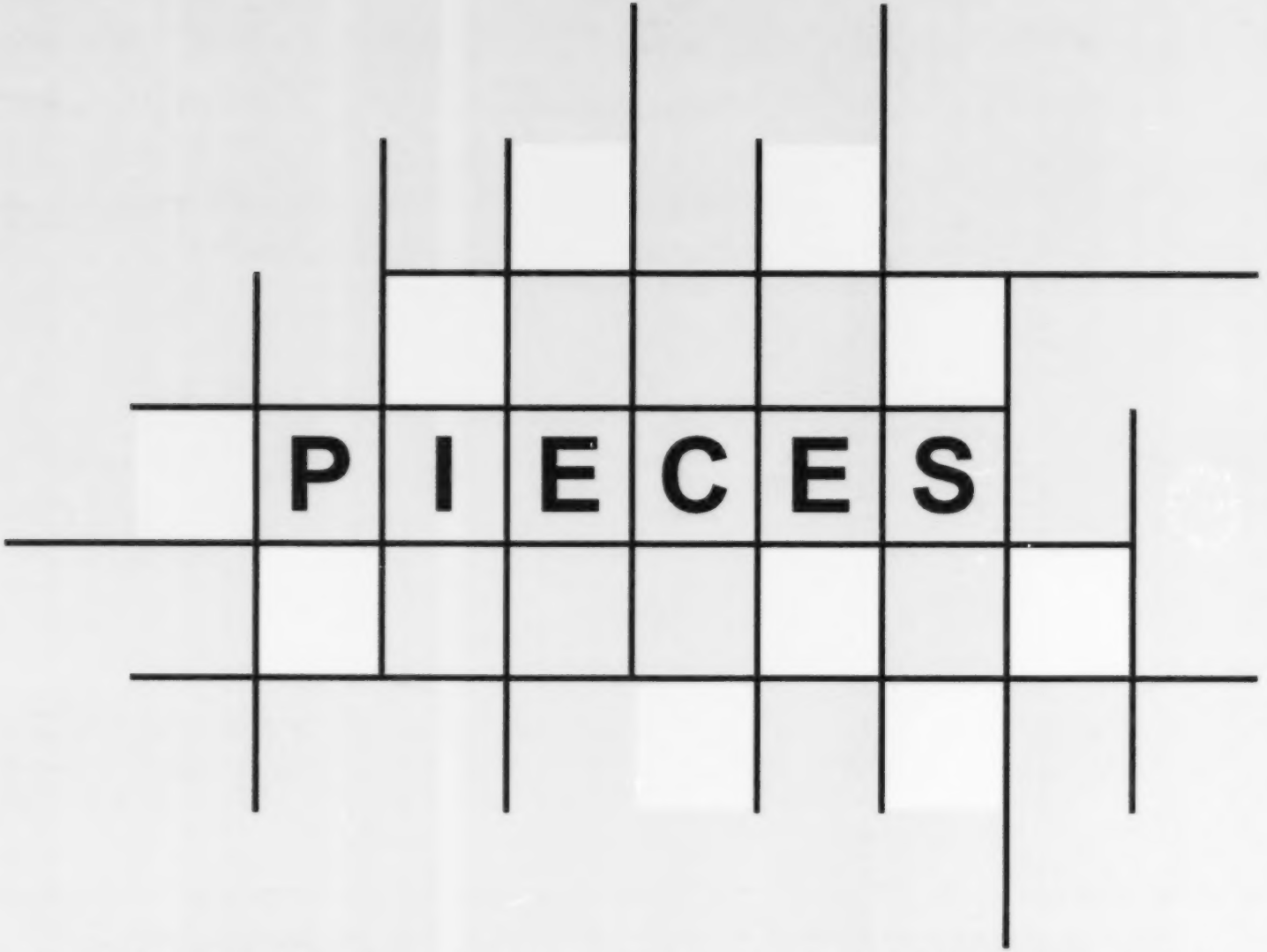

100 Years of What Makes Medicine Hat Medicine Hat

ESPLANADE
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Curated by **Philip Pype**

A Snapshot of 1906

"Medicine Hat is growing and we believe we will have a big city there one of these fine days. Business is good all around Medicine Hat and there is plenty of money in the country. We expect to see a huge influx of settlers this spring. The agricultural and cattle projects could not be very much better."

— J.L. Morris, visiting lumber manufacturer, February 1906 —

In 1906, Medicine Hat was indeed growing. The census that year pinned the population at 3,020, almost doubled from 1901. There was little doubt that this exponential explosion would continue.

The sky was the limit as there was talk of four major railroads converging in town, and almost every week there were reports of the "imminent" establishment of a new factory, each bringing hundreds of thousands of dollars of local investment and the employment of hundreds of new immigrants (preferably of British descent). With a new charter in hand, the City had the power to draw the investors, ensure there were schools and hospital care (funding of these was at that time largely the responsibility of the municipality), build sidewalks and develop waterworks. The newspaper was full of ads for lots for sale. There was an Opera House, and talk of a public library. Ranchers and dryland farmers were enjoying good prices and good weather, and had new brick churches to attend on Sunday. Sports were also a key part of local culture, with plans for Medicine Hat's first professional baseball team, and an indoor rink which was the site of many hockey matches. Medicine Hat was already famous for its abundance of gas, owned by the City, which would pay for it all as Medicine Hat was touted in newspaper columns in Toronto and Chicago (with a little conjoling by the local New Enterprises Committee and the Board of Trade) as "The New Denver" and the "Pittsburgh of the West", one promoter claiming that "The Banana Belt will Blossom".

Infrastructure

One of the main drives to gain City status was the freedom to develop infrastructure. As a town, Medicine Hat had to apply to the provincial government, and before that the territorial government, to take on municipal projects. Progress was always slow and frustrating.

Thus, as City status was impending, the Town hired its first engineer, Mr. William Morrison, who would be responsible for the City's infrastructure, including the Gas, Water, and Public Works departments. Mr. Morrison first met with Council at the beginning of April, when it was outlined that his priorities were to make a map of the town showing all water works, gas lines, hydrants, lamps, gates, valves, connections, manage tenders for cement, prepare plans and estimates of filtration and a standpipe in connection with the waterworks system, and make grades and place grade pegs for a number of sidewalks.

Mr. Morrison reported to Council later that month that a 1,000,000 gallon tank was required for the water filtration system as the city was already going through 500,000 gallons of water per day. Additional pressure was added as developers wanted infrastructure for the numerous new subdivisions, and potential investors wanted all services for proposed new factories. A struggle to keep up, Mr. Morrison again reported to Council in September that labour shortages, and demands for increased pay were causing delays.

Major infrastructure projects were undertaken by all levels of government that year in Medicine Hat. The building of the Finlay Bridge was a provincial project as the Alberta government was working to improve transportation throughout the region. The construction of the new City municipal building was a priority of the municipality. After lobbying by the City, construction began on a federal building, the new post office, across the avenue from the new City Hall.

The CPR was also building up its infrastructure in 1906, in response to expectations of competing railroads coming through town, and a booming west. Repair shops and the roundhouse were enlarged, and gas furnaces were installed for the local manufacture of engine springs. The bunkhouse was also upgraded along with the water car house. Also, the old depot was replaced with a bigger and more elegant structure.

The cornerstone of the building stated a completion date of 1905, but it was not until December 3, 1906 when City Council held their first meeting there. The building also housed the fire station. During the construction there was some controversy as the building included a clock tower, but a working clock was cut from the budget with its $1000 cost plus upkeep expenses. Some later postcards of the building show clock hands, but close inspection tells that they were drawn in.

Esplanade Archives 0714.0002

Construction of Finlay Bridge began October 10, 1906, but the bridge was not officially open to traffic until May 21, 1908. When construction started, it was touted to be the longest bridge of its kind in Alberta, stretching 900 feet. The original plans included a street railway track down the middle, as at various times a street car system was discussed by City planners.

Esplanade Archives 0266.1.0009

The CPR was building for the boom as well, making many upgrades to the rail yards in 1906. The most visible and long lasting of these was the construction of a new depot, which was expanded to its current size in 1912. This depot was more in line with the CPR's corporate image, made Medicine Hat a more attractive stop along the line, and was intended to handle a greatly increased number of passengers who would either visit or make Medicine Hat their home.

Esplanade Archives 0117.0013

Industry

Industry is what drove the boom in Medicine Hat. The new City Charter allowed the municipality to offer numerous incentives for manufacturers to set up shop in Medicine Hat, including tax exemptions, free sites, purchasing of stock, guaranteeing debentures, as well as free, or almost free water and gas. Everything was allowed except cash bonuses.

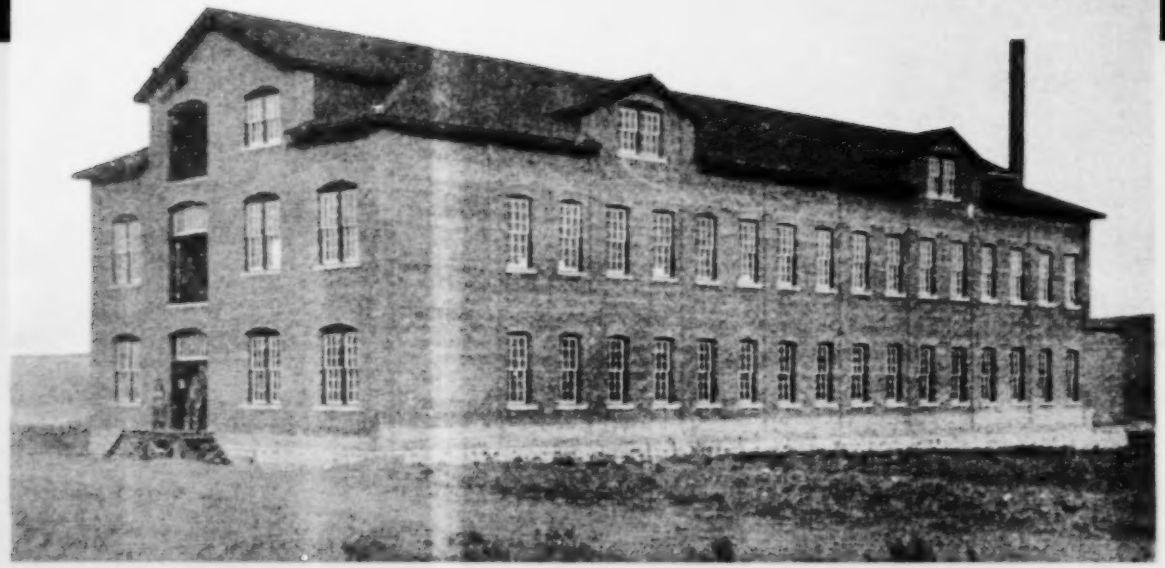
An example of a manufacturer the City enticed was a maker of confectionary and biscuits, as well as a bottling works, financed by W.H. Doty of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. He requested and received from the City a free site, valued at $1200, a tax exemption for 20 years, free water, and gas at 5 ¢ per thousand cubic feet. Mr. Doty promised that within a year the operation would employ 25 people. However, it never grew beyond a small operation with a store front for local sale. The company folded sometime in the mid-1920s, likely around the time their tax exemption expired.

Often said to be Medicine Hat's first industry, the Medicine Hat Woolen Mills were also heavily subsidized by the City, receiving a $30,000 guarantee of its bonds. This company did not survive the boom. The building was converted into cold storage by Malcolm Canneries, which had its start in 1906 and was also heavily subsidized by the City and was heavily invested in by residents. It, through 3 or 4 owners, never was a success.

Every few weeks there was promise of a new industry and the newspaper reported its establishment as imminent. There were promises of sugar processing factories, foundries and steel mills, meat packing plants and numerous others. Some materialized, but most did not. Some ideas were investigated and were brought to fruition a few years later by other business interests. The potentials of the clay deposits were being explored by various firms, and there was some smaller scale brick manufacturing, but it was Alberta Clay Products, begun in 1910, which really made this a key industry for Medicine Hat. The use of natural gas for glass manufacture was also investigated in 1906, by an official for the CPR who, on a trip here brought sand which he melted in a furnace. Although not directly linked to this first experiment, Dominion Glass was a major employer in the area from 1913 to 1989, and for many years Altaglass has brought notoriety to the city.

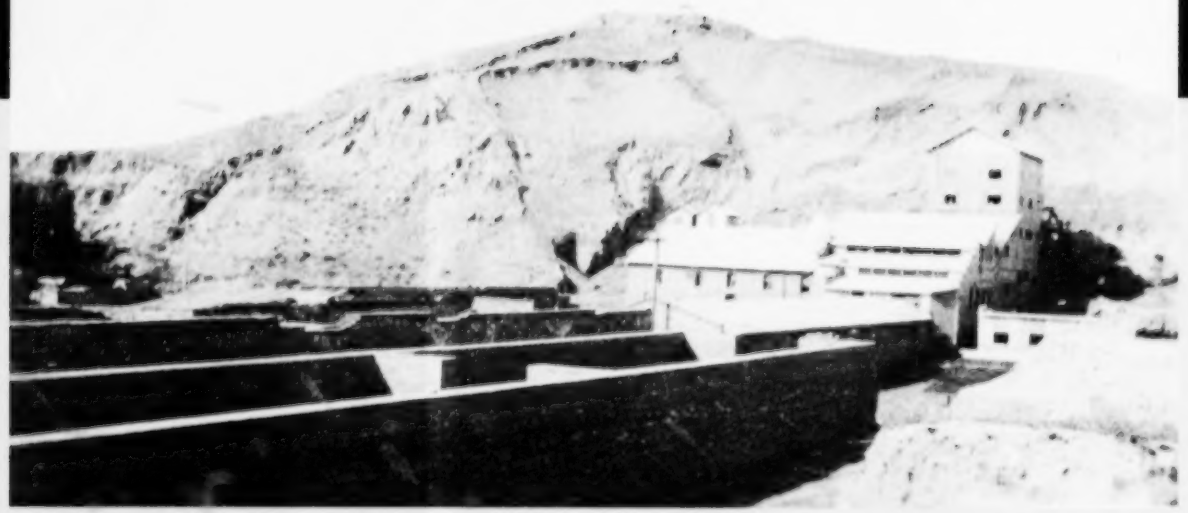
The Medicine Hat Milling Company began as a small operation which processed local grains for the local market. In 1914 the company was purchased by Lake of the Woods, and the plant was expanded in 1916 to include concrete elevators and a six storey warehouse. It has produced Prairie Pride, Big Loaf, Eclipse, Fourex, and Five Roses Flours as well as Wheatlets and Wheat Gems cereals.

Esplanade Archives 0110.0093



Founded in 1901, the Woolen Mills Company was a source of pride for Medicine Hatters, as they looked towards the significant structure as an early sign of Medicine Hat's legitimacy as a manufacturing centre. When the Woolen Mill asked the Town in 1906 to guarantee $30,000 in bonds, Alderman Smyth stated that "the company was deserving of every consideration of the city." Unfortunately the company went out of business shortly thereafter.

Esplanade Archives 0110.0093



Bricks have been commercially produced in Medicine Hat since 1886 when the first batch of 5,000 came out of the kiln at Medicine Hat Brick Company, pictured above circa 1913. By 1906 there were three brick plants in or near town, including the Purmal and Brier operations. All were busy keeping up with orders and at times there were reports of shortages. The industry would prove to be one of the most stable throughout Medicine Hat's history.

Esplanade Archives 0328.0234

Agriculture

The land of southeastern Alberta was beginning to look different in 1906; the range was "turned wrong side up" as more and more homesteaders were moving into the area, placing pressure on the existing ranching operations.

Since the Palliser Expedition (1857-1860), it was thought that the land of southeast Alberta was too dry to support crops. However, with a Dominion government's push towards dryland farming rather than ranching, a decade of wetter than usual weather, promises of mass irrigation projects, and propaganda that exaggerated the quality of land, experienced and not-so-experienced dryland farmers from the American Midwest and elsewhere began to settle in the southeast corner in greater numbers.

During the summer of 1906, it was announced that one of the largest ranching operations in the area was giving in to these pressures. The Medicine Hat Ranching Company sold its 6000 acres to Nova Scotia interests, knowing that it would be put under cultivation. This was not the end to the cattle industry, however, as record livestock export numbers were recorded in 1905 with 13,025 head of cattle and 13,424 sheep. Unfortunately, the devastating winter of 1906-1907 reduced these numbers for years to come.

In 1906 the Southern Alberta Land Company promised the Dominion government to irrigate 380,000 acres and thus, attract the settlers to fill them. J.D. MacGregor, of the SAL, claimed "the Banana Belt will Blossom". Also promised were numerous subsidiaries which would set up shop in Medicine Hat to process the bountiful production, including fruits and vegetables. The company never came close to meeting its claims, in many cases leaving settlers stranded without the irrigation they had counted on.

Settlers and the government were warned by ranchers, who had over twenty years experience west of the Cypress Hills, that weather worked in cycles. Undoubtedly dry weather would return. Many of those who began farming around Medicine Hat early in the twentieth century did abandon their efforts in the 1920s and 1930s as drought and depression made dryland farming impossible.

Although the days of the open range were coming to a close in southeastern Alberta, beef production has remained a staple of life around Medicine Hat. The winter of 1907 was a blow to the industry, but it has been argued that it would have been much worse if there had not been farmers to provide extra hay to keep some of the herds warm and fed.

Esplanade Archives 0039.0006

Dryland farming was an extremely difficult undertaking, especially in 1906 when the land was still broken with horse and plow. Weather was unpredictable and crops were very susceptible to disaster ... drought, grasshoppers, hail, windstorms. The land had experienced a long drought in the 1890s, but by 1906, few of the farmers working the area had been around to experience it, to know that such disaster could return.

Esplanade Archives 0058.0034

The Southern Alberta Land Company set up exhibits like this one to propound their vision of the semi-arid prairie once irrigated; lush fields of green bearing a wide array of fruits and vegetables. Although never succeeding in irrigating the 380,000 acres they had proposed in 1906, the company was successful in keeping much smaller plots watered in order to produce the fruits and vegetables for showings like this.

Esplanade Archives 0058.0006

Natural Gas

On November 8, 1902, No. 2 well was turned on and the gas flowed into the municipal gas system. In 1903, the Town of Medicine Hat passed a by-law, with the consent of the electorate, to drill to a deeper well, to 1000 feet, and dry gas with plenty of pressure was hit at 1010 in 1904. Before this, most wells were shallow, the gas containing too much moisture to be really effective. In September 1905, any doubts were erased as to the validity of the resource below the city, when a second high producing well was drilled.

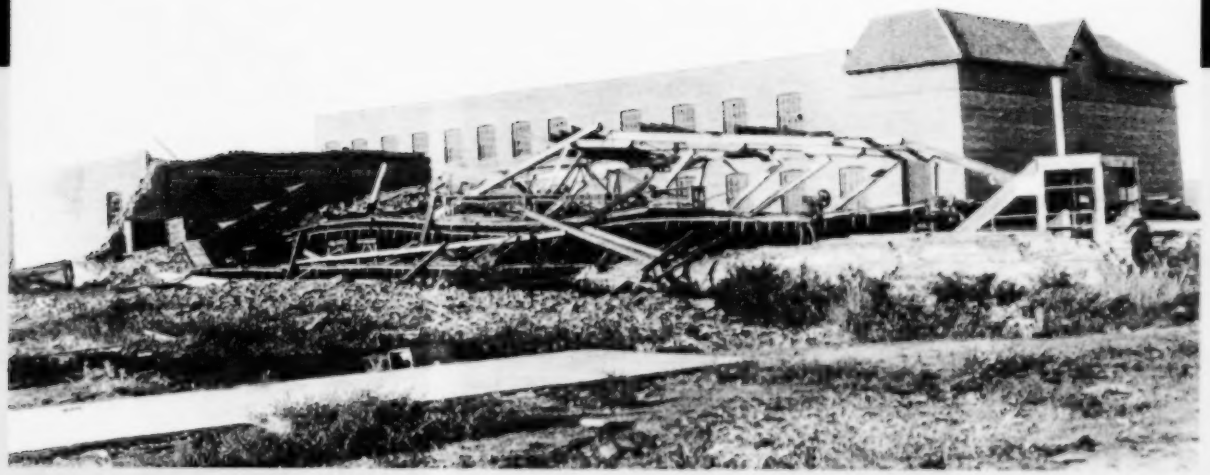
In order to take advantage of the economic boom that was beginning across western Canada, the City used the availability of this inexpensive resource as a selling point to draw industry, offering gas to manufacturers "at the absurdly low rate" (Chicago Chronicle) of 5¢ per thousand cubic feet. This allowed plants like the Woolen Mill to be powered for 87¢ per day. Households paid higher rates, 17.5¢ during the summer and 27.5¢ in the winter. However, this was reconsidered for the beginning of 1907, when residential rates were lowered to 15¢ in order to make the system more fair for the small consumer.

Along with the industries it helped draw, gas provided an economic boost to the Hat. Gas was very inexpensive to provide as each well only required a single employee to monitor it and running pipes to homes was not costly. It required no processing and provided significant revenue for the City; surpluses allowed for reductions in taxes as in 1906, gas produced more net income than the tax base.

Medicine Hat was very fortunate to exist over top a bed of natural gas, but it also produced many hazards. Before the City took over the system, individuals and small companies dug haphazard wells wherever they liked, and many of these locations were not recorded. Thus, leaks at unmarked well sites were not uncommon. There were incidents of homes blowing up as well, and in one case an entire family perished when a furnace was not properly ventilated. In 1906 the City was being sued by the Purmal Brick Company for $1000 to cover the cost of damage to the brick stable following an explosion. The City eventually won the case.

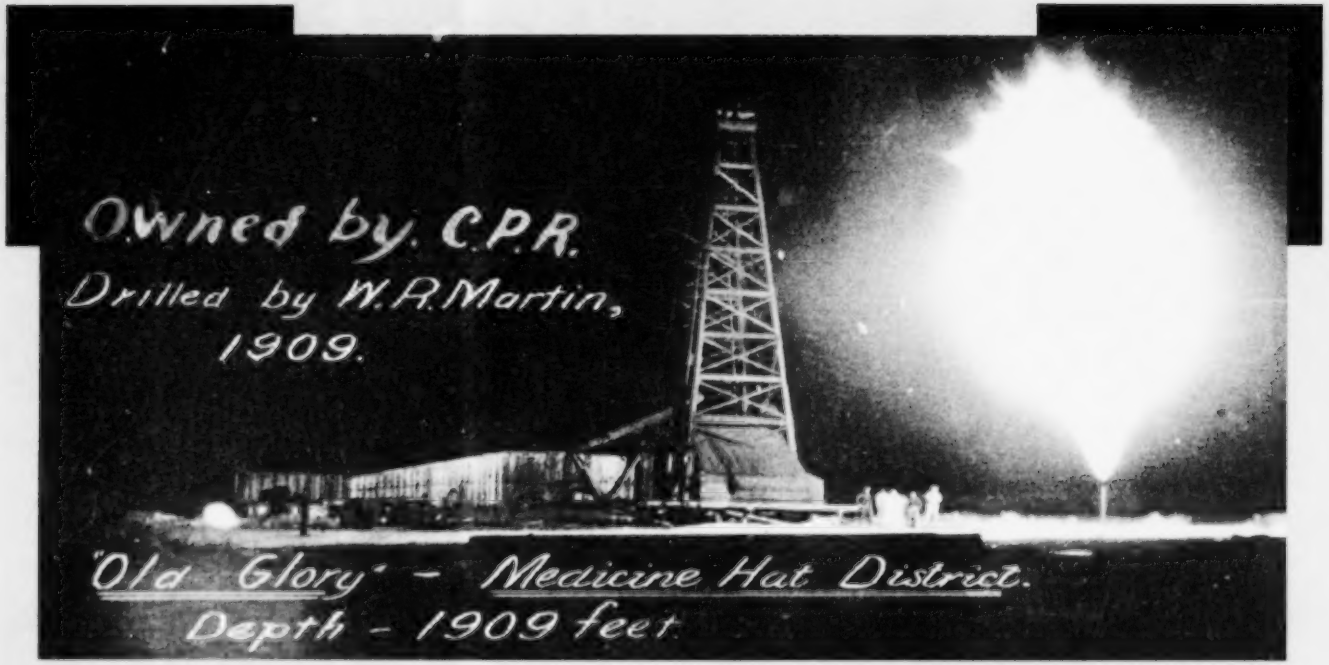
On special occasions or when dignitaries visited, it was a customary practice to flare a gas well, a show of the City's wealth in the resource, and to provide entertainment for visitors and locals alike. As in this photo, spectators would usually dress in their Sunday best for such events.

Esplanade Archives 0525.0135



On March 18, 1913, Hatters learned how dangerous the commodity which brought the city prosperity could be, when the refrigeration building at the Medicine Hat Canneries was leveled by an explosion. Five people were killed; two firemen, an employee of the Gas Department, plus a man and twelve year-old boy who were observing the fire at a presumed safe distance. Numerous others were injured as the three-storey facility was flattened.

Esplanade Archives 0350.1.0089



The CPR was the first to use natural gas in the Medicine Hat area, hitting a pocket while drilling for water for the steam locomotives, at Langevin in 1883. It was considered more a nuisance than a bonanza. By 1909 this attitude had changed as the immensely productive "Old Glory" was drilled to a depth of 1909 feet, producing an astounding 4.5 million cubic feet a day, which the CPR claimed could produce 21,000 horsepower, the equivalent of 3200 tons of coal.

Esplanade Archives 072.0085

Healthcare

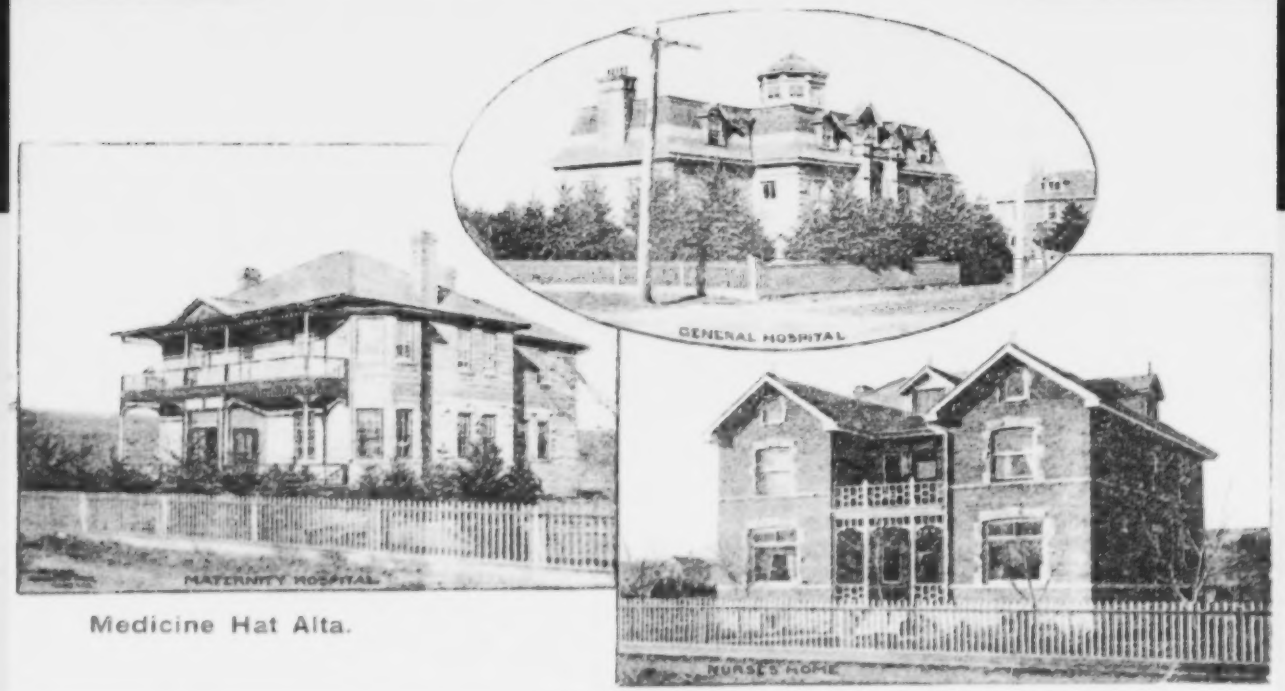
Medicine Hat General Hospital first opened in 1889, the first hospital between Winnipeg and Vancouver Island. Marcel Dirk, hospital historian, has argued that originally the hospital was built for three reasons, which propelled it through the first few decades of its existence: medical necessity, charity, and boosterism.

All of these components were still in effect in 1906, driving the growth of the facilities. The second floor was built onto the Maternity Hospital in 1904, a new Nurses' Home was completed in 1905, and a wing was added to the main hospital building, more than doubling its size, in 1907. 1906 saw the acquisition of a new ambulance and a push towards an isolation hospital. Such growth was required as in both October and November, record usage of over 1500 hospital days each month were reported. It was also a matter of civic pride as the minutes of the October board meeting states, "Our hospital has occupied the premier and pioneer position among western hospitals, and should be kept in that place."

Healthcare was not funded by any particular level of government, and was thus largely dependent on charity. There was a general appeal to raise funds to help offset $10,000 in current debts while funding additions. Grants were also sometimes received from various governments, including the City.

These efforts were met with some success. It was reported at the November monthly board meeting that an entire block was purchased from the CPR behind the current hospital site for $900. This provided room for the planned new wing which was built in 1907. Also, $1,000 was paid towards the hospital's debt. While affording this, the Hospital was also able to discontinue receipt of fees for services provided by the Maternity Hospital.

The Women's Hospital Aid Society was a great source of morale as well as fundraising. In 1906 they were hard at work raising the necessary funds to purchase furnishings for the Nurses' Home, the General Hospital itself, and the Maternity Hospital.



There was much expansion of healthcare and auxiliary services in the years around 1906. The Maternity Hospital, first built in 1894, had a second story added in 1904. The Training School for Nurses was also started in 1894, a Nurses' Residence built in 1905 to house the student population. A wing was added to the main hospital building in 1907. Thus, the above post card image was likely produced in 1905 or 1906.

Esplanade Archives 0117.0015

The above image is of the Isolation Hospital, 1912. This facility was located near present-day Kin Coulee Park. The purpose of such a hospital was for the isolation of contagious disease in order to prevent outbreak. Small pox, typhoid, and influenza were all of serious concern. The Hospital Board began pushing for funding for such a facility, estimating its cost at $5,000 in 1906. In 1907, $10,000 was promised for its construction, but the building permit states that the final price-tag was only $1,500, indicating that plans were originally for a much more significant complex. In the meantime, tents, and a retro-fitted ice-house were used.

Esplanade Archives 0350.1.0046

Immigration

Western Canada, and Medicine Hat, could boom only if enough people came to drive the economic engine. This was a difficult undertaking, and a lack of labour limited the feasibility of new factories and made the building of infrastructure difficult.

In 1905, Frank Oliver replaced Clifford Sifton as Canada's Minister of the Interior. This resulted in a drastic change in the focus of which immigrants the federal government pursued. Under Sifton, immigration was encouraged from all over Europe, including the east. Mr. Oliver, however, quickly instituted a policy which encouraged a primarily British immigration to the west, previously being noted as saying, "We resent having the millstone of this Slav population hung around our necks."

This Anglo-Saxon focus was popular in Medicine Hat, which was visited by the Executive Director of the British Immigration, Tourist, and Colonization Society in 1906. He stated "The people this society brings to Canada are of a superior class." This organization also encouraged young women to come as there was still a very disproportionate number of men to women in western Canada, and there was a domestic shortage.

Asian immigrants were openly discouraged. During a City Council meeting, while interviewing a contractor for the construction of sidewalks, Mayor Forster asked, "Will you employ white labour?" The response, "No Chinese or Japanese."

Settlers were also recruited from the mid-west United States and eastern Canada as well. Newspaper accounts recited complaints of an exodus from these places, but like most promotional material of this period, such claims were exaggerated.

There was a local push for immigrants to come to Medicine Hat specifically as well. Along with attracting investors, the City and the local Board of Trade hoped to attract immigration with pamphlets and planted newspaper articles. Also, Mr. E.H. Bennett, owner of the Gas City Investment Company was the brother of Canada's government agent in Nebraska responsible for enticing people to western Canada. With both brothers having financial interest in Medicine Hat, they likely prospered from this arrangement.

In the first years of the twentieth century immigration to Medicine Hat and area was steady, but not overwhelming. This was the land and immigration office before the opening of an office in the new federal Post Office building. The posters in the window are examples of promotional material to draw immigrants to western Canada, offering 160 acres of free land. The three gentlemen are W.T. Finlay, L.B. Cochran and W.A. Burton.

Esplanade Archives 0525.0104

As the first decade of the twentieth century progressed, and more immigrants were encouraged to obtain land for farming, people flocked to the Land Office. This is the line-up for registrations when the office in the Post Office building opened in 1908. The Homestead Act of 1872 required individuals to register their quarter sections in person, and make improvements to them (tilling soil and building a dwelling).

Esplanade Archives 0290.0110

Education

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 1906, the Medicine Hat School District became Medicine Hat School District #76, as it is today. There would not be a separate Catholic School system until 1910.

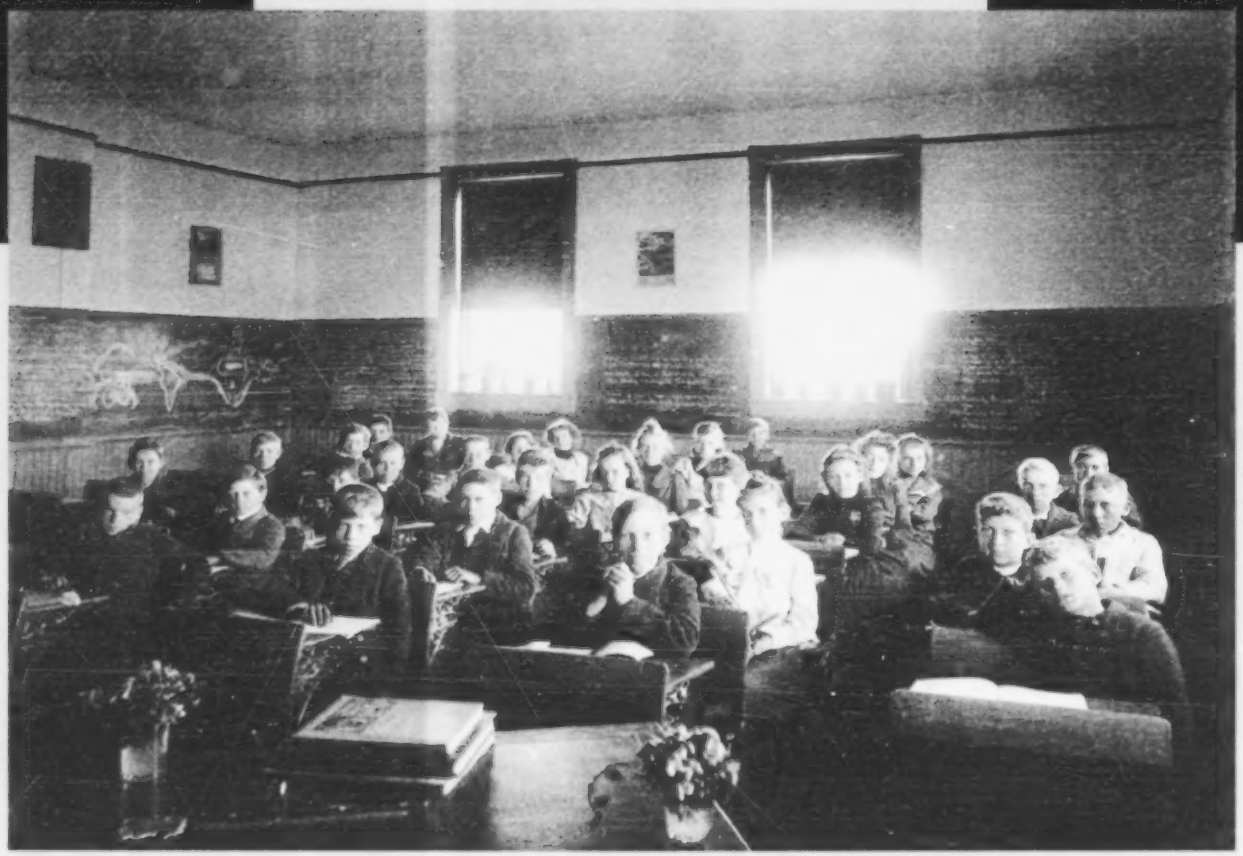
The school board faced many issues as its two schools. Toronto Street School and Montreal Street School required significant improvement to accommodate its 621 students. Toronto Street School, originally constructed in 1889 was already showing signs of its age and inadequacies. It was not yet connected to the City's expanding sewer system and was relying on a 6 foot wide cesspool behind the school building. In February and March the school had to shut down for over a week as the cesspool was improved, with better drainage installed. During this period the school was also fumigated. This did not resolve all issues as in July the school board continued to complain that conditions were deplorable, calling for tenders to cement the basement floor, which was used as a children's play area. The use of cement too was far from perfect, as in 1906 the cement floor of Montreal Street School was condemned by the Provincial Health Officer. Montreal Street School was only two years old.

There were also challenges in getting children safely to school. The railway yards split the town into two, with Montreal Street School on the Flats, and Toronto Street serving the downtown and Hill. The population had grown more on the Flats, so students had to cross the rails to get to class. A dangerous undertaking at any age, this was especially scary for children as young as five. The need for a bridge over, or tunnel under the tracks was brought to council, but no action was taken. Also, with a big push by the City to build sidewalks, the School Board felt it a priority for walkways to be built up to the schools as children were often arriving for class covered in mud.

Many improvements were made to the schools in 1906 as in the spring, the City offered 100 trees for planting on the school grounds, and Montreal Street School received its library furnishings. By the end of the year, the School District was in possession of 377 books in its libraries.

Montreal Street School first opened its doors for the 1904-1905 school year, just in time as in 1903, the school district had 528 students registered. Even with Toronto Street School's 7 classrooms and the old Presbyterian Church building being pressed back into service as a school building, this meant an average of 66 students per classroom. With a truant officer on staff, the rooms were full to the rafters.

Esplanade Archives 0351.1.0040



This class was photographed in 1902, the last year before the school district added levels above Standard Grade Five. A fee of $7 was levied for students in these upper grades for the first semester, $5 for the second for those in the new high school program.

Esplanade Archives 0207.0002

The Arts

For over a century Medicine Hat has had a tradition of arts, desiring the expression and entertainment which the arts; visual, performing, and literary, provide.

In 1906, the performing arts were the realm of expression most observed by Hatters. With an Opera House, as well as numerous church hall and school venues, Medicine Hat experienced a wide variety of amateur local and traveling professional shows which inspired and entertained. As an example of the variety, the Opera House hosted the following events in 1906: The Pickets, an African American husband and wife team who sang, danced, and played the banjo; Richards and Pringles Georgia Minstrels, a group of "the Big 6 Comedians"; Douglas Vaudeville Company, from Winnipeg; Jerry and Kerry, who delivered "clean" comedy for the more discerning taste; The Roscian Opera Company performed Flowtow's "Martha", a light comedy opera; and Madame Beatrice Langley, a highly touted vocalist.

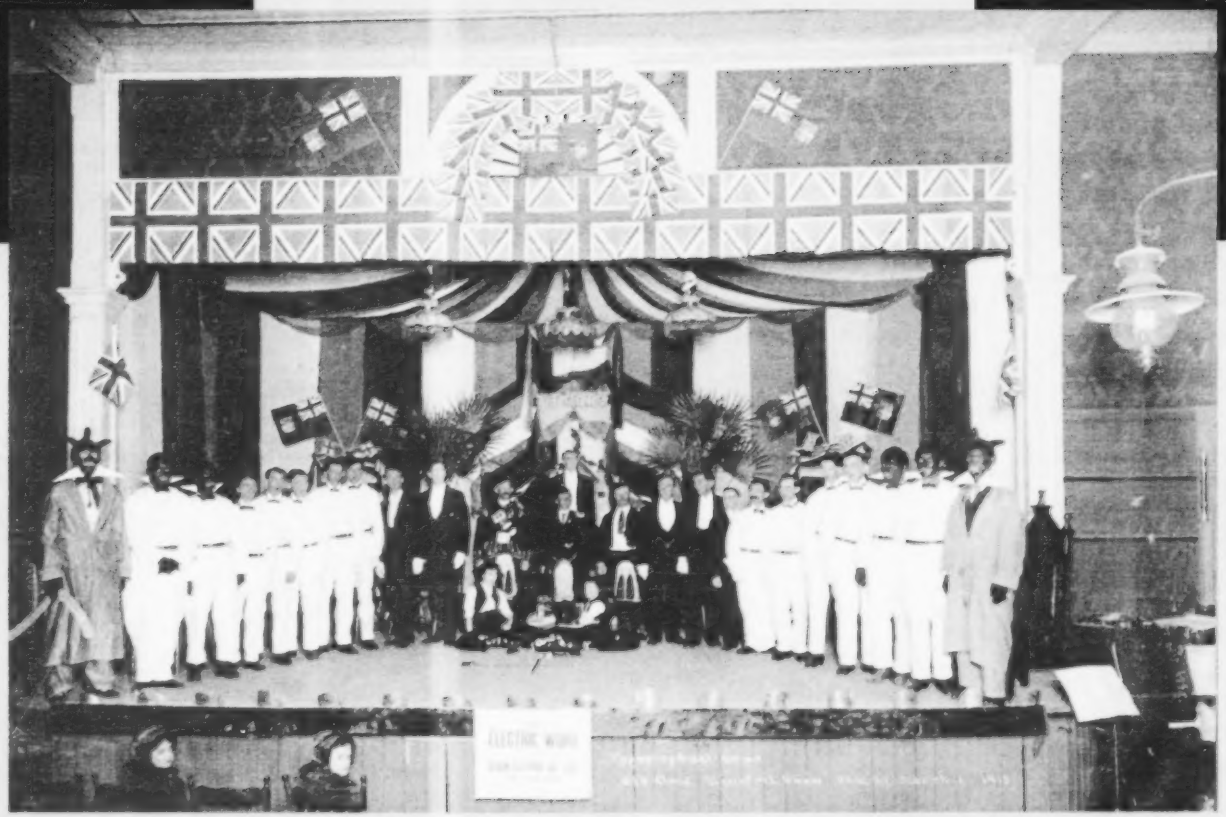
There were also numerous local performances, such as the annual St. Patricks concert at St. Patrick's Church, and Christmas concerts were held by most churches and at the schools.

The literary arts were also finding their feet in 1906. There was talk of the development of a public library. At the time there was the reading room at St. Barnabas, but this facility was for men only. In 1906 the Women's Literary Club was founded, to provide the ladies of the city an opportunity for study and appreciation of the world's literature and, in 1911 the club played an instrumental role in proposing a public library which would be accessible to all. The Young Presbyterians also formed a Literary Society in 1906, their mandate of course different, to form and organization for the improvement of young minds within limitations suitable for a church organization.

From 1906 there appears to be no formal organizations pursuing the visual arts, but forms such as oil and watercolour painting, as well as photography were popular artistic undertakings of the period.

The Opera House, built by James Colter in 1901, was the artistic centre for early Medicine Hat. Although it does not look like much; occupying the second floor of this building above the hardware and furniture store, it hosted everything from comedy to operatic performances. Seating would have been tight as up to 500 could see a show.

Esplanade Archives 0039.0006



This local performance by the Printers Union was not an unusual style of performance for the period, playing up racial differences. The target of such humour was not always "coons" however, as African American Dave Picket reportedly received great applause for his act in 1906 at the Opera House which involved him putting on "white face" to play comedic Irish and Dutch characters.

Esplanade Archives 0067.0031

Religion

Religion was a mainstay of Medicine Hat life early in the twentieth century. Most people claimed an affiliation with a church and congregation, and many attended weekly services. The vast majority of people in the Hat in 1906 were Christian, but there was the beginnings of a small Jewish population as well, forming a synagogue, the Sons of Abraham, sometime before 1913.

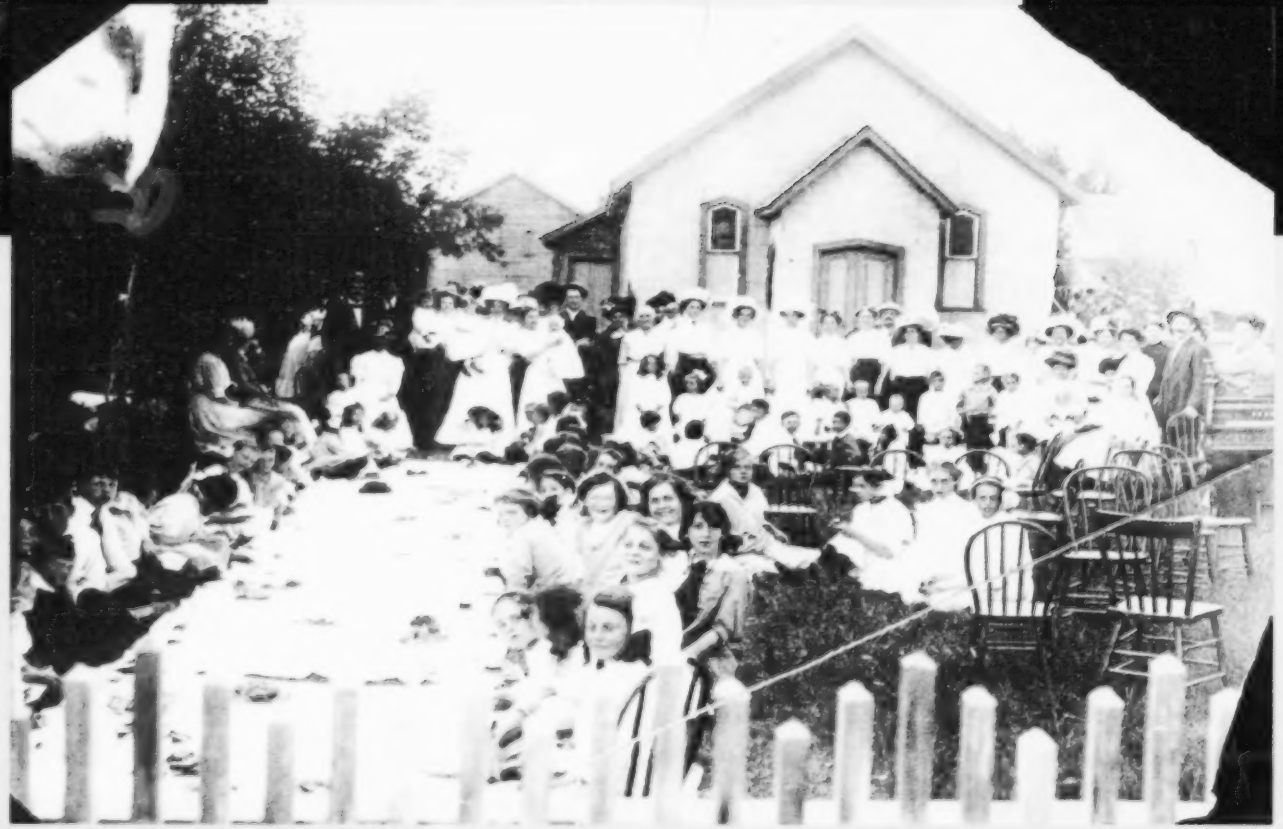
Like many of the institutions of Medicine Hat, churches were becoming more permanent in their structures, as a growing population, and more wealth allowed. The first brick church to be built in Medicine Hat was Century Methodist in 1900, followed shortly thereafter by St. John's Presbyterian in 1902. Today this is the oldest church building in Medicine Hat.

As well as their spiritual purpose, churches also fulfilled a social role. Most churches hosted Christmas concerts with performances by their Sunday School classes, church picnics were held during the summer, and churches also provided an outlet whereby people of all ages could socialize.

The Church also filled a morality function as Medicine Hat experienced the growing pains that went along with economic boom. Many more single men were moving to Medicine Hat for work than were women. Alcohol consumption, as in most western Canadian communities, was a concern to many, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was active in abating this abuse and the social problems it caused. Weekly WCTU columns were placed in the Medicine Hat News on the evils of alcohol.

In 1906 churches were growing, and in the case of the Presbyterians, there was a division of the congregation and the creation of a new church, the Knox Presbyterian Church which held services on the north side of the tracks.

Other active Churches included St. Patrick's Catholic Church, a Baptist church, and the Salvation Army had been present in the community since 1899.



A tradition which has changed very little over the past 100 or more years is the church picnic. This image is of such an event held by the Baptist congregation circa 1895. Picnics allowed for socializing for all ages, as well as the enjoyment of food, games, and music.

Esplanade Archives 0525.0243

In 1900, Century Methodist Church was Medicine Hat's first house of worship to be built with brick. Although solidly constructed, the building was sold to be demolished for the construction of a new Royal Bank in 1912. The congregation had outgrown the building as the City's population grew, and the real estate boom caused the land it was on to be very valuable. Using the profits of the sale, the congregation built what is now Fifth Avenue United for an estimated $100,000.

Esplanade Archives 0110.0044

Sports

The range of sports which were popular in 1906 sound much like the list of sports played today. Hockey, baseball, lacrosse, track and field, curling, and soccer were all popular.

Hockey and baseball were the most organized of the sports. There were local leagues as well as teams which represented Medicine Hat throughout Alberta.

1906 saw Medicine Hat's first foray into the world of professional baseball, as the Western Canada Baseball League was organized that fall with its inaugural season planned for 1907. $10,000 of stock was sold at $20 a share, and Medicine Hat joined the league as the Mad Hatters, along with teams from Edmonton, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Although winning the championship in 1907, the team folded with a deficit of $1600 at the end of its first season. The caliber of play was reportedly quite good; pitcher Ralph Works later went on to toss for the Detroit Tigers.

Hockey was also popular with many local organized and pick-up games, and teams from the Hat traveled to other southern Alberta towns. In 1906, Medicine Hat entered a team into the Southern Alberta Hockey League, competing against Lethbridge, McLeod, Pincher Creek, Frank, Cowley, Bellevue, Blairmore, and Coleman.

The main venue for hockey was the indoor wood framed structure built on the Flats by Charles Colter in 1901. A covered rink, it was even more exceptional as this arena was artificially lit with gas fixtures. Of course, the river and the creeks were also used.

Lacrosse was waning in popularity in 1906, but it was still played, and curling had already been popular for a number of years. Although reports of games are rare, there were occasionally references in the Medicine Hat News of soccer and rugby matches. 1906 also saw the introduction of track and field into the school system with the first field day of sport "to create in the boys a desire for physical excellency." Indeed, like most sporting activities, this was exclusively the domain of the males.

Lacrosse has been played in Medicine Hat since the 1880s. Like baseball and hockey, there were local teams as well as squads who traveled to other nearby communities to play. Although lacrosse could be a very rough sport, little protective equipment was worn. This informal team portrait is dated 1908.

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Curling was a popular winter sport, particularly for gentlemen. Like hockey, one of the biggest challenges was the short local season which could be interrupted mid-winter by chinooks. Thus, bonspiels were often held under a roof, or on the river, as was the case Christmas Day, 1905. Rinks from Medicine Hat did on occasion travel to nearby centres to participate in bonspiels as well.

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